



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN & ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE

CITY OF WARREN

Warren County, Pennsylvania

PURPOSE

The City of Warren (City) is soliciting qualified consulting firms to submit a proposal to prepare a new implementable comprehensive plan and planning services necessary to complete a full overhaul and re-write of the City's zoning ordinance in response to the Comprehensive Plan adoption in a phased approach.

SUBMITTAL DEADLINE: 4:00 pm on APRIL 2, 2021

PHASE I: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The comprehensive plan was last updated in 1998. The City seeks to create a new implementable comprehensive plan which will serve as a guide when considering policy changes, land use planning, budget preparation, economic development initiatives and capital improvement programs.

The end product will utilize the Five Key Principles for Creating an Implementable Comprehensive Plan promoted by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and will be focused around the six principles outlined in the American Planning Association's (APA) Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Report 578, "Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans".

There are two primary goals for the new plan. First, to create a vision for the City for the next 10 years based on input from citizens and various other stakeholders within the City. Second, to provide a series of realistic projects, programs, etc. that can be implemented to achieve the City's vision. Overall, the plan must contain practical strategies to implement the recommended projects and plans which will promote the sustainable development of the community in a coordinated, consistent manner and which will be embraced by community decision-makers and officially adopted by City Council.

PHASE II: COMPLETE ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE

Warren's last significant update to the zoning ordinance took place in 1988, and many regulations and permitted uses especially in the C-1 and C-2 districts are outdated and do not encourage the highest and best use of the City's walkable downtown properties. The City of Warren is looking for form-based or context sensitive applications of a new zoning code, creating design and infill standards for development in the main commercial business district and historic commercial areas as well as developable property along the riverfronts running through Warren that is compatible with eco-tourism and natural habitat preservation.

The City's new comprehensive Plan will rely heavily on community feedback to inform the plan's main priorities, which include commercial redevelopment as well as maintaining connectivity and walkability. Warren must update its zoning ordinance to position itself for smart growth redevelopment that will take advantage of the riverfront redevelopment near the heart of the Downtown Business District ("downtown Warren"), as well as allow modern mixed-use development in key areas that remain underutilized.

Downtown Warren historically possessed a strong local business presence; many longtime residents had relatives who owned a corner store, restaurant, or weekend gathering place prior to the overall economic decline that affected the Erie and surrounding Northwestern Pennsylvania region. Recently the City has experienced renewed interest in "bringing back Main Street," as a handful of interactive businesses have opened along the riverfront and changing demographics have encouraged families seeking a walkable community to move in and invest in fixing up Warren's trademark old Victorians. The City's goal is to keep this momentum going by being proactive about pursuing a modern zoning ordinance that preserves everything good about "old" Warren while ensuring the City will have a bright future.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The City of Warren is a built-out community and contains 3.04 square miles and a 2020 population of 8,869. Adjacent municipalities to Warren include Conewango, Glade, Pleasant and Mead Townships. Almost half of the population of Warren County (38,813) reside within the City or the four adjacent townships.

The City of Warren is bordered on the south by the Allegheny National Forest. The Allegheny River and Conewango Creek run through the center of the City of Warren. US Route 6 and US Route 62 along with the Buffalo and Pittsburgh railroad also pass-through Warren. Interstate 86 which runs East-West through Southern New York State is 28 miles from the City.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Warren is the county seat of Warren County. The City contains a 28 block Historic District which is on the National Register, encompassing the downtown and adjacent residential areas to the east, north, and west of the downtown. The range of historic architectural styles date from the mid-nineteenth to twentieth century. Popular styles include Greek, Italianate, Queen Anne, Bungalow and Foursquare.

The commercial portion of the district consists principally of two-to-four story masonry buildings dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Warren retains its original 1795 gridiron street pattern with many residential streets containing wide rights-of-way, which are lined with mature shade trees.

Warren is the center of numerous places of business, commerce, and finance for Warren County. Located within the City are major employers such as Northwest Bank, United Refining Company, Betts Industries, Whirley Drink Works, Superior Tire, Targeted Pet Treats, Blair, and Pennsylvania General Energy.

The City has an unemployment rate of 6.4%. There are 660 companies located in the City. The largest industries in Warren are financial services, manufacturing, health care, social assistance, and retail trade.

Statistically the City has a population of 8,869 people. Of these 97% are white, .6% are African American and the remaining are mixed race or ethnicity. Overall, 93.9% of the population are high school graduates or higher with 25% having a college or graduate degree. The median household income is \$42,939. There are approximately 4,891 housing units. Of those 4,317 are occupied units and 574 are vacant. The ratio of owner occupied to rental occupied remains at approximately 60%:40%.

POPULATION TRENDS/COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Like most rural communities, Warren has experienced a steady decline in population after peaking at nearly 15,000 in 1940 to a 2020 census number of 8,869 residents. However, the City has been attempting to bounce back with Impact Warren, Streetscape Projects, and a Riverfront Development Project in the downtown. These projects included townhouse, senior citizen housing, upper floor residential development, office, retail, and commercial development. The City completed a downtown strategic plan in 2017. The proposed updated comprehensive plan and subsequent zoning ordinance revision will help to further community and economic development with an eye toward future growth.

SCOPE OF WORK PHASE I: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The following scope of work illustrates the City's approach toward the completion of an implementable comprehensive plan that also incorporates the six principles of a sustainable comprehensive plan recognized by the APA and outlined in The Role of the Comprehensive Plan (Godschalk and Anderson

2012). Suggestions from the consultant may be included to expand, refine, or improve the conceptual approach while achieving the goals for the final product.

Community Engagement and Promotion- Public engagement is required. A strategy shall be provided that outlines how City stakeholders will be involved throughout the project. The strategy shall ensure that the planning process actively involves all segments of the community in analyzing issues, generating visions, developing plans, and monitoring outcomes. Innovative engagement strategies that generate high levels of participation and ownership of the plan must be utilized. Meetings shall be arranged around issues instead of functional chapters. As part of the strategy, promotional opportunities and tools shall be provided, including a variety of methods of communication to inform and involve the community; a consistent branding platform, and an interactive website, and interactive community meetings must be included.

1. **Community Assessment and Issues Identification-** An assessment of community issues, problems to be solved, needs to be addressed, and opportunities to be pursued shall be identified. Current county and City data and plans shall be utilized in assessing the community and identifying issues. Tools for the assessment of community issues include the following:
 - Community Analysis - including Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis, Political, Economic, Social (including demographic and cultural), Technological, Environmental, and Legal factors (PESTEL) Analysis and Market and Pro forma Analysis to support land use and development recommendations and to support fiscal workability of recommendations.
 - Community functions and systems - including land and land use, housing, transportation, utilities, environment, history, safety services, human and health services, etc.
 - Community sectors - neighborhoods, commercial corridors, industrial areas, natural area, etc.
 - Community Assets - infrastructure and services, economy drivers, "place" amenities, housing, cultural activities and entertainment, schools, and other local features or resources that are integral to quality of life and attracting investment.
2. **Community Vision** - Priority issues should be defined. Each issue shall include data that substantiates and validates the issue, objectives, ideas and recommended solutions, and a plan that outlines actions to be taken, needed investments/capital improvements, needed regulations, estimated costs, responsible parties, a financing plan, and a timeline for implementation.
 - Please outline how consultant would administer public meetings, steering committees, focus groups, and support Trestle-to-Trestle Taskforce with technical expertise, conceptual drawings & renderings, and additional support.

3. **Trestle-to-Trestle Taskforce** – An initiative launched in February 2021 that will be administered and facilitated by the Warren County Chamber of Business and Industry (WCCBI) with the focus study area the City of Warren bounded to the East by Oak Street, to the South by Crescent Park, to the North by Pennsylvania Ave and to the West the railroad trestle crossing the Allegheny River.

The Mission of the Taskforce is to evaluate all properties within this footprint identifying ownership, current use and potential for redevelopment. Redevelopment being defined as business or residential occupancy in such a manner as to enhance the overall economic environment within the City of Warren, provide space for delivery of goods or services determined to be ineffectively provided within the City of Warren and enhance the value and operations of existing businesses within the City of Warren.

The Taskforce shall be comprised of individuals representing the following:

- Property and business owners located within the focus area.
- City of Warren administration and council
- Warren County Chamber of Business & Industry
- Interested City of Warren residents
- Consultant engaged for City Updated Comprehensive Plan & Zoning Ordinance Update

The Taskforce shall be responsible for the development of a detailed report on opportunities developed through the work of the Taskforce within the area of focus. This report shall include a prioritization of property redevelopment recommendations which shall include methodologies for completion for each recommendation. This report shall be presented to the City of Warren for possible endorsement and inclusion in the City Comprehensive Plan.

4. **Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan** - The City, in concert with Warren County, is in the process of updating its RPOSP. The plan prepared on behalf of the City will be incorporated into the new comprehensive plan by reference.
5. **Implementation Plan** - The Plan must have specific actions to turn broad goals into a series of tasks that can be easily understood and undertaken. Each goal shall specify the steps that will be taken, in what order, by whom and with what resources. The Plan shall also:
- Provide recommendations that include depth and detail to promote implementation.
 - Include specific recommendations with practical depth and detail instead of more general recommendations.
 - Include visualizations and concept drawings to help convey design recommendations.
 - Connect plan implementation to the capital improvement planning process and annual budgeting process.

- Address sustainable principles including:
 - Livable Built Environment - Ensure that all elements of the built environment, including land use, transportation, housing, energy, and infrastructure, work together to provide sustainable, green places for living, working, and recreation, with a high quality of life.
 - Harmony with Nature - Ensure that the contributions of natural resources to human well-being are explicitly recognized and valued and that maintaining their health is a primary objective.
 - Resilient Economy - Ensure that the community is prepared to deal with both positive and negative changes in its economic health and to initiate sustainable development and redevelopment strategies that foster green business growth and building reliance on local assets.
 - Interwoven Equality - Ensure fairness and equity in providing for the housing, services, health, safety, and livelihood needs of all citizens and groups.
 - Healthy Community - Ensure that public health needs are recognized and addressed through provisions for healthy foods, physical activity, access to recreation, health care, environmental justice, and safe neighborhoods.
 - Responsible Regionalism - Ensure that all local proposals account for, connect with, and support the plans of adjacent jurisdictions and surrounding regions.

6. Final Report and Adoption - The consultant will prepare a final report that is:

- Succinct - efficiently uses words and is short in length.
- Simple - easy to understand by the layperson and avoids jargon.
- Visual - key concepts are illustrated using maps, graphics, and charts.
- Transferable - the plan can be easily downloaded and/or distributed throughout the community.

The final plan will meet all criteria of the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) and follow the adoption process for a comprehensive plan as outlined in the MPC. The plan should inspire and create excitement. The plan should be easy to use and easy to understand by utilizing maps, photos, and illustrations to tell the story of the City of Warren. Presentations to the Planning Commission and City Council will be required.

Key Deliverables

1. Preliminary reports and project updates prepared at six (6) and twelve (12) month milestones with completion at eighteen (18) months.
2. One digital copy in Microsoft Word format and PDF format, print-ready graphics included in each preliminary report, ten (10) color copies of final plan draft for comment; final plan copies to include ten (10) bound color copies, one unbound color copy, one digital Microsoft Word format and one digital PDF format. Both the Microsoft Word format and the Adobe PDF format shall have a navigable table of contents and be indexed to allow searching capabilities.
3. GIS layers and maps, materials in a software format to be easily updated.
4. Presentation graphics for each of two public meetings to be determined prior to meeting.
5. A Plan presented in a way that not only is accessible across a variety of media platforms, but that allows the Plan to be easily edited in the future by City staff. The plan shall include:
 - Specific design guidelines
 - Ideas illustrated by drawings, photos, and simulations.
 - Ready-to-use samples of tools and best practices
 - Complete streets guide.
 - Recommendations on amending land use ordinances
 - Budgeting for Capital Improvement Planning
6. Press releases and other public dissemination of information concerning the project work must acknowledge the grant support made possible through the Strategic Management Planning Program overseen by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.
7. Consultant shall attend, provide all needed materials, and coordinate all required public input and update meetings.
8. It should be noted that the City is simultaneously soliciting proposals in this RFP for a complete review and revision of its Zoning Ordinance. While the Zoning Ordinance review can commence prior to the completion of the new comprehensive plan, it is understood that the Zoning Ordinance revisions cannot be adopted by City Council until the new comprehensive plan is adopted by City Council.

SCOPE OF WORK PHASE II: ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE

Key Strategic Interests

A successful zoning ordinance update will provide solutions for the following issues:

1. Appropriate Uses in Appropriate Districts

Warren's C-2 district, formerly a walkable, interactive downtown, has lost some of its original character due to an "everything and the kitchen sink" treatment of permitted uses in recent years. The new zoning ordinance should encourage interactive uses such as coffee shops and cafes, restaurants, small retail, and newer concepts such as creative spaces and microbreweries, brewpubs, and craft distilleries.

2. Transit-Oriented Development

The City will work with local stakeholders to explore opportunities for commercial development that would take advantage of the Clark Street area and the Transit Authority bus station located near the heart of downtown Warren.

3. Historic Character and Non-Conforming Lots and Buildings

Much of Warren's development took place before certain requirements regarding setbacks, lot size, and other common land use regulations were in place. Other structures may need creative solutions to achieve accessibility and safety requirements. Explore the use form-based code and the International Existing Building Code to preserve the historic character of downtown Warren. In residential districts, the new zoning ordinance should consider realistic requirements and limitations for older lots and structures.

Scope of Services

The selected consulting firm will work closely with City staff and the City Planning Commission throughout the project. The consultant shall be required to participate in public hearings or present progress updates to the City Council from time to time in service of the overall project goals. In the process of addressing the aforementioned key strategic interests, the consultant will:

- Adhere to all requirements of the Municipal Planning Code.
- The Consultant shall be responsible for writing the new zoning code, as well as providing guidance on best practices and trends, and checking assumptions.
- Meet/conference call regularly with City staff for project review and status updates.
- Attend City Planning Commission meetings as needed (Planning Commission meets monthly).
- Prepare all necessary advertisements and correspondence pursuant to the MPC, Third Class City Code and Pennsylvania Sunshine Act.
- Determine the level of community resources and administrative capacity of the City in regard to zoning and land use enforcement and develop regulations respective of same.

- Be familiar with creative solutions to zoning and land use challenges, such as overlay districts and form-based code, and recommend them to the City as appropriate.
- Evaluate the use of sustainable infrastructure options. Pervious surfaces would be particularly helpful within the river corridors and floodplains.
- Design performance standards to encourage the desired forms of use and development in each district; avoid requirements that are prohibitive in realistic use of the area.
- Assist City staff in distributing information to the community about the project and/or final product as the need arises (i.e., graphic representations of timelines, permitted use changes, new building size/setback requirements).
- Eliminate contradictions and redundancy; identify areas in the existing ordinance that lack clarity and create new zoning codes that are straightforward and avoid confusion.
- Identify existing uses that may be phased out in the new zoning ordinance and develop appropriate processes for how the City handles the transfer and permitting of these uses for future occupants.
- Design a project completion schedule that balances a detail-oriented process with the City's need to position itself for mixed-use development in the immediate future.
- Reviewing the sign ordinance regarding outdoor advertising for alignment with current best practices, including temporary signage.
- Update terminology and definitions that are antiquated.

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

In order to facilitate understanding of the RFP requirements and submittals, a Question-and-Answer period will be conducted during the submittal process. Questions regarding RFP requirements or submittals may be directed to Vincent DeJoy and emailed to: vdejoy@cityofwarrenpa.gov until March 19, 2021.

Answers to questions that *materially change* the conditions and specifications of this request for proposals will be posted on the City's website after March 22, 2021, as an addendum to this document. Additionally, any candidate firms wanting to be sent any addendums or information by email must email Vincent DeJoy with their point of contact email address. Any discussions or documents will be considered non-binding unless incorporated in an addendum to the original. When addenda are issued, the proposal opening date may be extended at the discretion of the City.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND FORMAT

All responses to this RFP must be received in a sealed envelope and clearly marked "CITY OF WARREN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN" by 4:00 pm on April 2, 2021, to be eligible for consideration. Proposals shall be submitted to:

Nancy Freenock, City Manager
City of Warren
318 West Third Avenue
Warren, PA 16365

Seven (7) hard copies of the proposal shall be provided, along with a digital Adobe PDF that can be legibly printed on 8.5"x11" paper. The PDF files shall be indexed to simplify City review. Respondents are requested to be concise and proposals should include, in order, the following:

1. **Letter of Interest:** A brief cover letter summarizing the key points of the applicant's proposal and confirm an understanding of the Scope of Work. The letter shall provide the applicant's full name, mailing address, phone number, primary contact person, and email address.
2. **Work Program:** Overall project approach and process to be employed. Listing of proposed deliverables for each work step. Include any proposed changes/revisions to the scope of services of deliverables in order to meet project objectives. Note that the procedure for comprehensive plans as outlined in the MPC must be followed.
3. **Timeline and Schedule:** Proposed project schedule including timeline of major milestones, deliverables, and completion. The project timeline should be counted in weeks or months from date of contract award. Work may commence upon contract award and must be completed within eighteen (18) months of award. An expectation is that a written update of status of the project will be provided at the six (6) month milestone to be presented and attended at a scheduled Planning Commission meeting by consultants. At twelve (12) months a written preliminary draft will be presented to the Planning Commission for review and comments.
4. **Experience and Qualifications:** Brief organizational profile, including background and experience of the firm. Project organization chart including key staff to be assigned and their roles in the project. Listing, description, and link to similar projects that have been completed in the past 5 years by the prime consultant and/or proposed subcontractors. Reference list that may be contacted by the City for recently completed similar projects.
5. **Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE):** Detailed information describing the Pennsylvania DBE Unified Certification Program (PA UCP) certified DBE. Include:
 - The business name of the DBE with the address, contact person, phone number.
 - The North American Industrial Classification System (NAISC) code(s) that correspond(s) to the work to be performed by the DBE firm; and
 - The percent of the bid's cost to be contractually allocated to the DBE.
 - If no DBE is qualified, available, or willing to participate, the contractor must provide detailed, verifiable information describing the good faith effort made to locate a DBE. If the good faith effort is determined to be unacceptable, the proposal may be disqualified.
6. **Estimated Costs:** The Proposal shall include a lump sum fee as well as a detailed budget. Please submit estimated cost breakdown for both Phase I and Phase II. The budget must include an hourly rate schedule and estimated number of hours to be performed by each staff members assigned to the project. If any work is to be subcontracted, the Proposal should reference the

specific areas and costs. Any reimbursable expenses must be clearly indicated, and an estimate provided. For budgeting purposes, please anticipate a start date of May 1, 2021.

7. **DBE Involvement.** The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is committed to providing opportunities for Disadvantaged Business Enterprises to compete for work. While no DBE goal is established for this project, contractors are encouraged to involve DBEs in the required work and to submit documentation of any such involvement in the proposal. A letter of intent (or comparable documentation) from the DBE stating that the DBE has agreed to enter into a subcontract if the vendor is successful should also be included with the bid.

Only those organizations certified by Pennsylvania DBE Unified Certification Program (PA UCP) before the response date of this RFP qualify as Disadvantaged Business Enterprises.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND CONSULTANT SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals will be evaluated based on overall approach, team experience and qualifications, budget, organization structure, work plan and fit with the City. Preference will be given to consultant teams that work well together and provide the best services to obtain project objectives. Special consideration will be given to teams that provide examples/case studies where engaging outreach and facilitation led to development of successful solutions, particularly among diverse groups.

Following the evaluation of the proposals, the City may request firms to make presentations and/or be interviewed. If a determination is made that presentations are necessary, the presentations will take place via Zoom, at a mutually acceptable date and time. Tentative dates for possible interviews are in the Anticipated Timeline.

The City would prefer to commence the comprehensive planning project and the subsequent zoning ordinance update as a single project, two phase effort. Therefore, the City is seeking proposals for entirety of the effort.

The City reserves rights to award on an individual phase.

ANTICIPATED TIMELINE

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| 1. Issue RFP | March 3, 2021 |
| 2. Proposals due | April 2, 2021 |
| 3. Presentations by top qualifying firms | April 6-12, 2021 |
| 4. City Council authorizes contract | April 19, 2021 |

RFP DISCLOSURES

The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive any non-material irregularities or information in any RFP, and to accept or reject any item or combination of items.

The City assumes no responsibility or liability for costs incurred by Proposers in responding to this RFP or in responding to any further request for interviews, additional data, etc.

Following award of the contract by City Council, all RFP submissions are considered public records that are subject to Pennsylvania's "Right to Know" laws. Materials considered confidential by the Consultant must be clearly identified and include a statement of why said records should not be considered public records.

RESOURCES AND LINKS

"Creating an Implementable Comprehensive Plan" Workbook and Reference Versions 1.1. –Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (9/27/12)

"Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans" - American Planning Association Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Report 578 (January 2015)

"The Role of the Comprehensive Plan" (Godschalk and Anderson 2012)

City of Warren [Recreation, Park and Opens Space Plan 2021](#)

City of Warren Code of Ordinances <https://www.ecode360.com/WA2487>

City of Warren [Comprehensive Plan 1998 \(Graney, Grossman, Ray and Assoc. — consultants\)](#)

City of Warren Website: <https://www.cityofwarrenpa.gov/>

City of Warren: [Experience Warren: A Strategic Plan for Our Downtown \(October 2017\)](#)

City of Warren: [Warren, PA: Lodging Feasibility Study \(October 2017\)](#)

2005 Warren County [Comprehensive Plan](#)